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Letter dated 16 June 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to inform you that, on 15 May 2015, the President of the Republic of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, received in his office in Bujumbura a ministerial delegation of the East African Community.

The major points around which the discussions between the ministerial delegation and the President revolved and the President's responses are summarized below:

(a) Postponement of the elections: The Government has tried everything in its power under the Constitution.

(i) The local and parliamentary elections that were initially scheduled on 26 May 2015 will now be held on 29 June 2015, meaning a postponement of 34 days;

(ii) The presidential election will be held on 15 July instead of 26 June;

(iii) Organizing elections beyond the above dates would not allow for a second round, should there be one, and such a situation would trigger the establishment of a transitional government;

(b) Disarmament: Burundi already has a disarmament unit, which has so far collected more than 100,000 weapons and has been instructed to continue its work;

(c) Securing the elections: The defence and security forces have been deployed across the country not only to secure the elections but also to search for weapons that the civilian population may be in possession of illegally. As a matter of fact, weapons have already been seized;

(d) Civil liberties and freedoms: The Government has undertaken to suspend the execution of arrest warrants issued against the organizers of violent demonstrations. Politicians have also been urged to liaise with the Government to have security guards assigned to them. It should also be noted that children and persons under the age of full legal responsibility have been discharged from custody;

(e) Stopping violence and exercising restraint: The defence and security forces deployed in the four neighbourhoods of the city of Bujumbura where insurrection has been reported have continued to suffer from provocation and

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violence by insurgents. However, the forces have so far refrained from retaliating, except in cases of force majeure. Notwithstanding the recommendations adopted at the Summit of the East African Community of 31 May 2015, violent demonstrations have continued, the organizers thereof turning a deaf ear to scores of appeals by the Government and several organizations. Even though insurgency leaders are yet to publically declare the end of their operations, the situation in Bujumbura is returning to normal;

(f) Return of refugees: To date, more than 40,000 of the approximately 70,000 reported refugees have returned home and many more are returning on a daily basis. Most refugees fled owing to the panic caused by rumours conveyed by some politicians who do not wish elections in Burundi, with the complicity of some foreigners and some members of civil society organizations who want to plunge Burundi into chaos. All that was exacerbated by unprofessional and ill-intentioned media outlets that also spread rumours in the country, while fuelling disorder. The Government intends to send delegations to neighbouring countries to pacify its citizens and have them return home;

(g) Mediation: The Government of Burundi welcomes the efforts made by Said Djinnit and condemns delaying tactics used by the opposition and civil society in Burundi. Those were the first to ask for talks to pave the way for an environment conducive to elections. Surprisingly, they pulled out of negotiations over childish claims against the facilitator, eventually pushing him to resign. The Government would like to stress that there is no room for negotiation as far as the candidacy of the current President is concerned;

(h) Media and freedom of the press: The Press House is now open to all journalists. In the meantime, investigations are under way to establish responsibility following the participation of some media outlets and journalists in the failed coup, as well as in the vandalizing of media facilities. Journalists are currently organizing themselves to establish synergy in the coverage of the forthcoming elections. The Government of Burundi will support them in that endeavour;

(i) Electoral campaign: It is under way, this time with all political parties and independent political actors involved in the current electoral process. Calls from some politicians to postpone again and again the elections are motivated by their hopeless expectations with regard to the outcome of the elections, as they do not have militants on the ground. It is clear that it would be more advantageous for them to have a transitional government where they can get something than spending their meagre financial resources for nothing. The new electoral schedule has been readjusted as follows:

(i) 29 June 2015: Local councils and Members of Parliament;

(ii) 15 July 2015: President;

(iii) 24 July 2015: Senators.

You will note that, to date, 80 per cent of the recommendations made at the Summit of Heads of State of the East African Community held on 31 May 2015 have already been implemented by the Government of Burundi in order to show to Burundians and the international community its good will to bring about a peaceful end to the current political crisis.

I kindly request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Albert **Shingiro**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative